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# **Few Determinants of Compulsive Buying of Youth in Pakistan**

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## **Abstract**

Consumer compulsive buying has been an important area of study in consumer behavior research. The goal of this study was to determine the effect of factors like age, tendency to spend, post purchase guilt, drive to spend compulsively, feeling about shopping and spending and dysfunctional spending on compulsive buying behavior of youth in Pakistan. The primary data for this study was collected from questionnaire that was administered in Bahawalpur, Lahore and Islamabad. A convenience sample of three hundred and seventy one respondents was used in the study. Statistical techniques of correlation and regression were used for data analysis. The empirical findings show that the age has a significant but negative relationship with the compulsive buying behavior. However the factors tendency to spend, drive to spend compulsively, feeling about shopping and spending, dysfunctional spending and post purchase guilt are positively related to compulsive buying behavior.

**Key Words** Compulsive buying behavior, Youth, Pakistan, Tendency to spend, Drive to spend Compulsively, Feeling about shopping and spending, Dysfunctional spending, Post purchase guilt, Age

## **Introduction**

Compulsive buying is a phenomenon with serious societal and personal consequences. Consumer researchers have been exploring this phenomenon in an effort to describe, and identify it as clearly as possible. The introduction of new technologies like internet and television marketing campaigns by companies has introduced a new issue to society: compulsive buying (Roberts & Jones, 2001). Neuner *et al.*, (2005) found an increase in compulsive buying in last decade. Compulsive buying is characterized by undue or uncontrolled urge to shop and spend money. Advocates of consumer marketing should notice that consumption can be affected by negative buying impulses (Shoham & Brenner, 2003; Faber and O'Guinn, 1988). According to Edwards (1993), compulsive buying occurs when a consumer experience powerful, uncontrollable urge to shop and purchase. Consumer may proceed toward these urges. Compulsive consumer often engages in buying practice to compensate for unhappy events and low self-esteem (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). Some researchers consider compulsive buying to be a dichotomous behavior (Faber and O'Guinn, 1992) meaning that consumers can classify either as compulsive or non-compulsive. However research by Edwards (1993) indicates that compulsive buying, like many other consumer behaviors, occurs on a continuum. She found that compulsive buying ranges from non-compulsive, recreational, borderline compulsive, compulsive, and addicted buying. In other words consumers can experience no compulsive consumption tendencies, some compulsive consumption tendencies or chronic levels of this behavior. The act of buying may temporarily elevate the mood and self-esteem of a compulsive buyer; however it is often followed by feelings of shame or depression. Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) stated that people may use symbols to build or maintain a complete self definition as part of a commitment to a self defining goal. Consumers may compulsively buy products to match their subjective perceptions of themselves with a socially desirable or required appearance as a self defining goal (Elliott, 1994). Number of people experience compulsive behaviors like shopping, drug abuse, eating, gambling and variety of other obsessive compulsiveness. Compulsive person is trapped in a pattern of repetitive and senseless thinking and quite difficult for him to overcome. The personality disorder like anxiety and substance use are common in compulsive buyers (Black, 2001). Contemporary market economy presents abundance of goods and services, devaluing their intrinsic worth, with focus on price and the brand name. Present day globalized economy made available a bulk of

marketing stimuli to the modern consumers. More often consumerism describes the way of equating personal happiness, with purchasing material possessions and consumption in excess of one's need. Traditionally consumerism was related with capitalism and the west. Due to widespread of communication compulsive buying has crossed the geographical limits. As a consequence consumerism term is perceived negatively. People deny, the idea that they are "compelled to consume" or compulsive buyers. They rationalize the consumption process and find reasons for their buying behavior. Compulsive buying is one major area of concern in marketer and consumer relationship, and has harmfully affected the consumer, leading them to unmanageable debts. This research study investigates few antecedents of compulsivity. The objective here is to explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth in Pakistan, and factors like age, tendency to spend, drive to spend compulsively, feeling about shopping and spending dysfunctional spending and post purchase.

## **Literature review**

Compulsive buying is defined as a "frequent preoccupations with buying or impulses to buy that are experienced as irresistible, disturbing, and/or senseless" (Muller *et al.*, 2005). Compulsive buying can exist as a consumer's primary response for individuals to compensate for stress, frustration, disappointment, lack of self-esteem, structural deficit and distortion of autonomy in their lives through the act of buying (Neuner *et al.*, 2005; Koran *et al.*, 2006). Dittmar *et al.*, (2007) have identified three core features of compulsive buying which are consumer experience an irresistible urge to buy, consumer control over buying behavior is lost and consumer continue to buy despite adverse consequences on his various aspects of life. Compulsive buying and impulsive buying are sometimes confused with one another but are not synonymous constructs. Impulsive buying is motivated by an external trigger such as a product near the cash register. While compulsive buying is motivated by an internal trigger such as stress or anxiety and shopping and spending as an escape from the internal thoughts. Compulsive buying can be developed into addictive buying when it becomes a need to continuously spend, to alleviate stress and anxiety (DeSarbo and Edwards, 1996).

O'Guinn and Faber (1989) explained that once buying behavior is developed, the individual face great difficulty in controlling buying even after its detrimental effects are recognized. Koran *et al.*, (2006) added that once an individual is unable to control buying, he will frequently purchase

unnecessary items or more than what he can afford, and shop for longer periods than was planned. Mendelson & Mello (1986) study states that compulsive buying behavior is positively associated with excitement-seeking tendencies. The compulsive buyer use the shopping and spending process to seek excitement and sensations and face the tradeoff between control and loss. Thus need for excitement affect's individual's pattern of compulsive shopping and spending. Furthermore excitement seeking is related to dark side of compulsive consumption such as alcoholism, drug addiction, and cigarette smoking. The act of buying may temporarily elevate the mood and self-esteem of a compulsive buyer; however it is often followed by feelings of shame or depression (McElroy et al., 1995). The aftermath of compulsive buying may lead to family and/or marital discord, anxiety, frustration, and financial debt (Christenson et al., 1994). From a scientific perspective, compulsive buying is frequently overlooked and has been classified as an impulsive control disorder not otherwise specified (Black et al., 1998; Mueller et al., 2007). The Material values like the use of possessions to judge the success of others and oneself, the centrality of possessions in a person's life, and the belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction (Richins and Dawson, 1992). Numerous studies have found that materialists tend to be compulsive buyer (Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004).

The process of symbolic self-completion may be a driving force behind compulsive buying behavior. An individual needs others to acknowledge that he or she possesses a particular self-completion (Yurchisin and Johnson 2004).

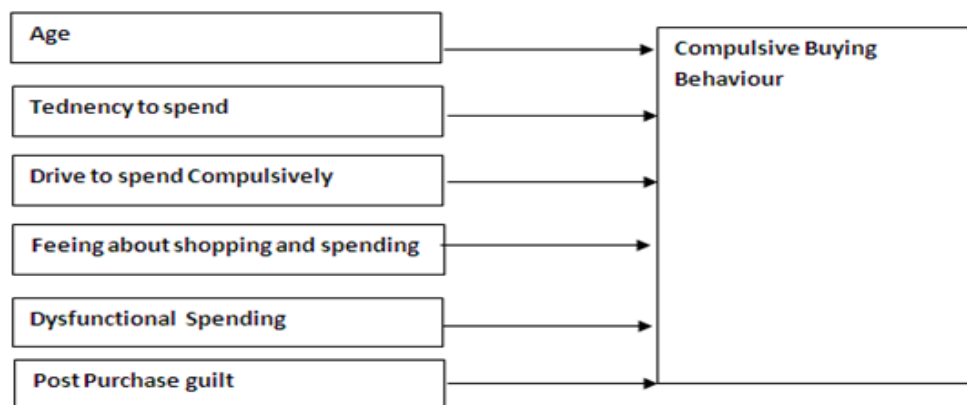
There could be five levels in which all customers could be clustered. These levels are non-compulsive, recreational, borderline, and compulsive and addicted (Edwards, 1993). According to Edwards (1993), non-compulsive buyers are geared to making planned purchases of items when they are needed. Recreational buyers in order to improve their mood occasionally make unplanned, impulsive purchases. Borderline compulsive buyers, have similar but stronger tendencies as recreational buyers of purchasing items to improve their moods. However, the recreational buyers differ from borderline compulsive buyers as the former may not feel post purchase guilt but the later may feel the guilt after purchasing items that they do not need. Compulsive buyers frequently purchase items to relieve stress or anxiety, often feel dissonance after purchasing items that they do not need, and often suffer negative emotional and economic consequences as a result of their purchasing behavior. Addicted buyers experience a continuous, powerful urge to purchase items that is so strong that they often neglect other obligations and

postpone or cancel other activities to act on this urge (Edwards, 1993). Research by Johnson & Attmann (2009) revealed that compulsive buyers of clothing experience anxiety and worry. This may imply that neurotic people worry generally desire to go shopping for and purchase clothing. Compulsive buying behavior is also been related to demographic attributes like consumer's age. Based on a national sample of adults in the United States, Wood (1998) found an inverse relationship between age and compulsive buying. Previous research addressing the relationship of age and compulsive buying indicates that younger consumers are more strongly affected. O'Guinn and Faber (1989) have stated that compulsive buyers tend to be younger. Roberts and Jones (2001) have estimated that compulsive buying among young adults range from 6 to 12.2% o, which is significantly higher than previous estimates of compulsive buying range from 1 to 6% (Faber and O'Guinn, 1989). Research in EU identified that 46% of Scottish 16 to 18 year olds adults shows premature tendencies toward uncontrolled buying, inability to resist advertising and other marketing stimuli and a lack of self control over their spending habits (Garces Prieto, 2002). The moderating effects of age are found in compulsive buying behavior of people from collectivist cultures, age effects negatively (Kacen and Lee, 2002). The difference in age and compulsive buying exist even at gender level. Young females of 18 or 19 years show higher compulsive tendencies than other age groups (Christenson et al., 1994). Recently Ergin (2010) have estimated that compulsive buying among young adults is higher than aged consumers.

### **Theoretical framework**

A theoretical framework is developed with the help of literature review. It is the vital part of social research, highlighting the graphical representation of hypothetical model developed and used in a study. We used six variables in order to evaluate compulsive buying behavior. In our study, dependent variable is compulsive buying behavior and independent variables include age, tendency to spend, drive to spend compulsively, feeling about shopping & spending, dysfunctional spending and post purchase guilt.

Graphical representation is as follows:



## Objectives

- To explore the relationship between age and compulsive buying behavior of youth.
- To explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth and tendency to spend.
- To explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth and compulsive drive to spend.
- To explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth and feeling about shopping and spending.
- To explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth and dysfunctional spending.
- To explore the relationship between compulsive buying behavior of youth and post purchase guilt.

## Research Hypotheses

Following research hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Age is has a relationship with compulsive buying.

H2: Tendency to spend is related to compulsive buying.

H3: Drive to spend compulsively is related to compulsive buying.

H4: Feeling about shopping and spending is related to compulsive buying.

H5: Dysfunctional spending is related to compulsive buying.

H6: Post purchase guilt is related to compulsive buying.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Date Collection**

The study was based on primary data. Data was collected from college and university students from Lahore, Islamabad and Bahawalpur of age 18 to 32 years. Respondents were asked to record information regarding their consumption behavior in a structured questionnaire.

### **Sample size**

A total 371 students completed the questionnaire. There are 186 male and 185 female. Of the 400 respondents 371 (93%) have responded. Convenience sampling method was used for this study.

### **Instrument**

Data was collected through structured questionnaire, the questions about demographics and compulsive buying were recorded by respondent in the presence of author. The compulsive buying scale established by Edward (1993) was used to measure compulsive buying of youth in Pakistan. The good reason for selecting Edwards' scale was because the wording of the items was eagerly accepted by respondents in pilot survey. Finally Edwards not only granted the permission to use scale but also give some guide lines.

## **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Correlation and regression was applied to check the relationship between variables. The most correlated variable is F1= Tendency to spend with correlation value of 0.873 and sig value of .000. The Second the most correlated variable is F4=Dysfunctional spending with correlation value of 0.674 and sig value of .000. The third most correlated variable is F2=Compulsive Drive to spend with correlation value of 0.531 and sig value of .000. Fourth most correlated variable is F5=Post purchase guilt with correlation value of 0.469 and sig value of .000. The Fifth most correlated variable is F2=Compulsive Drive to spend with correlation value of 0.117 and sig value of 0.024. Finally the least correlated variable is F6=age with correlation value of -.110 and sig value of 0.034



**Table No 1**

		Correlations						
		Compulsive Buying	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Compulsive Buying	Pearson Correlation	1	.873**	.531**	.117*	.674**	.469**	-.110*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.024	.000	.000	.034
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F1	Pearson Correlation	.873**	1	.317**	-.105*	.612**	.262**	-.140**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.043	.000	.000	.007
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F2	Pearson Correlation	.531**	.317**	1	-.095	.275**	.105*	-.061
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.069	.000	.044	.244
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F3	Pearson Correlation	.117*	-.105*	-.095	1	-.050	-.198**	.105*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.043	.069		.341	.000	.043
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F4	Pearson Correlation	.674**	.612**	.275**	-.050	1	.183**	-.025
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.341		.000	.626
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F5	Pearson Correlation	.469**	.262**	.105*	-.198**	.183**	1	-.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.044	.000	.000		.177
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
F6	Pearson Correlation	-.110*	-.140**	-.061	.105*	-.025	-.070	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.007	.244	.043	.626	.177	
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Where F1= Tendency to spend F2=Compulsive Drive to spend F3=Feeling about shopping and spending  
F4=Dysfunctional spending F5=Post purchase guilt. F6=Age

## Hypothesis One

This hypothesis postulates whether there is a relationship between age and compulsive buying.

H1: Age is has a relationship with compulsive buying.

**Table 2A**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.110 <sup>a</sup>	.012	.009	.49742

a. Predictors: (Constant), F6

**Table 2B**

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.118	1	1.118	4.519	.034 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	91.300	369	.247		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), age

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

**Table 2C**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.287	.196		16.802	.000
	F6	-.292	.137	-.110	-2.126	.034

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The relationship between compulsive buying and age is tested with H1. The regression analysis in Table 2C yield a value of sig. = 0.034 which is less than 0.05 (Beta = -0.292, sig. = 0.034 < 0.05). As coefficient is negative indicating that the greater the age lowers the compulsive

buying tendencies of youth. So it is determined that compulsive buying and age are related. The data also suggests that age has a significant but negative relationship with compulsive buying. Thus data support H1. Previous literature and research shows that compulsive buyers generally tend to be younger (Faber et al., 1995; Dittmar, 2005).

For the purpose of determining compulsive buying tendencies of Pakistani youth, we had developed hypotheses from H2 to H6 to examine the relationship between factors tendency to spend, compulsive drive to spend, feeling about shopping and spending, dysfunctional spending, and post purchase guilt with compulsive buying behavior of youth.

## Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis assumes whether there is a relationship between tendency to spend and compulsive buying.

H2: Tendency to spend is related to compulsive buying.

**Table3A**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.873 <sup>a</sup>	.763	.762	.24386

a. Predictors: (Constant), F1

**Table3B**

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	70.474	1	70.474	1185.08	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	21.944	369	.059		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), F1

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

**Table 3C**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.199	.050		23.852	.000
F1	.612	.018	.873	34.425	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The relationship between compulsive buying and tendency to spend is tested with H2. The regression analysis in Table 3C yield a value of sig. = 0.000 which is less than 0.01. The data shows that compulsive buying behavior has significant but positive relationship with tendency to spend, therefore this hypothesis is accepted (Beta = 0.612, sig. = 0.000<0.01). Hence it is determined that compulsive buying behavior and tendency to spend are infact positively related. So H2 is accepted.

### Hypothesis Three

This hypothesis assumes whether there is a relationship between drive to spend compulsively and compulsive buying.

H3: Drive to spend compulsively is related to compulsive buying.

**Table 4A**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.531 <sup>a</sup>	.282	.280	.42421

a. Predictors: (Constant), F2

**Table 4B**

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.017	1	26.017	144.577	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	66.402	369	.180		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), F2

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

**Table 4C**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	2.067	.071		.000
	F2	.286	.024	.531	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The relationship between compulsive buying and drive to spend compulsive is tested with H3. The regression analysis in Table 4C yield a value of sig. = 0.000 which is less than 0.01. As data shows that compulsive buying behavior has significant but positive relationship with drive to spend compulsively, therefore this hypothesis is accepted (Beta = 0.286, sig. = 0.000 < 0.01). So it is determined that compulsive buying behavior and drive to spend compulsively are infact positively related. So H3 is accepted.

## Hypothesis Four

This hypothesis assumes whether there is a relationship between feelings about shopping and spending and compulsive buying.

H4: Feeling about shopping and spending is related to compulsive buying.

**Table 5A**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.117 <sup>a</sup>	.014	.011	.49702

a. Predictors: (Constant), F3

**Table 5B**

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.264	1	1.264	5.116	.024 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	91.154	369	.247		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), F3

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

**Table 5C**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	2.654	.101		.000
	F3	.063	.028	.117	.024

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The relationship between compulsive buying and feeling about shopping and spending is tested with H4. The regression analysis in Table 5C yield a value of sig. = 0.000 which is less than 0.01. As data shows that compulsive buying behavior has significant but positive relationship with feeling about shopping and spending, therefore this hypothesis is accepted (Beta = 0.063, sig. = 0.024 < 0.05). Therefore it is determined that compulsive buying behavior and feeling about shopping and spending are in fact positively related. Hence H4 is accepted.

## Hypothesis Five

This hypothesis assumes whether there is a relationship between dysfunctional spending and compulsive buying.

H5: Dysfunctional spending is related to compulsive buying

**Table 6A**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.674 <sup>a</sup>	.455	.453	.36949

a. Predictors: (Constant), F4

**Table 6B**

**ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.042	1	42.042	307.956	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	50.376	369	.137		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), F4

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

**Table 6C**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.944	.056		34.471	.000
	F4	.347	.020	.674	17.549	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The regression analysis in Table 6C yield a value of sig. = 0.000 which is less than 0.01. As data shows that compulsive buying behavior has significant but positive relationship with dysfunctional spending, therefore this hypothesis is accepted (Beta =0. 347, sig. = 0.000<0.01). Therefore it is determined that compulsive buying behavior and dysfunctional spending are in fact positively related. Hence H5 is accepted.

### Hypothesis Six

This hypothesis assumes whether there is a relationship between post purchase guilt and compulsive buying.

H6: Post purchase guilt is related to compulsive buying.

**Table 7A**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.469 <sup>a</sup>	.220	.218	.44188

a. Predictors: (Constant), F5

**Table 7B**

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.368	1	20.368	104.314	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	72.050	369	.195		
	Total	92.418	370			

a. Predictors: (Constant), F5

b. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying



**Table 7C**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.213	.069		32.204	.000
F5	.242	.024	.469	10.213	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Compulsive Buying

The regression analysis in Table 7C yield a value of sig. = 0.000 which is less than 0.01. As data shows that compulsive buying behavior has significant but positive relationship with post purchase guilt, therefore this hypothesis is accepted (Beta =0. 242, sig. = 0.000<0.01). So it is determined that compulsive buying tendency and post purchase guilt are in fact positively related. Hence H6 is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

The forecaster variables for the study were age, tendency to spend, drive to spend compulsively, feeling about shopping and spending, dysfunctional spending and post purchase guilt. Based on the literature review we identified dependent and independent variables different hypotheses were developed and tested. Our research shows that compulsive buyers generally tend to be younger. Compulsive buying disorder appears to be widespread and have an age of beginning in the late adolescence or early youth.

We found that compulsive buyer is motivated by an internal trigger such as shopping and spending is an escape from the internal trigger. Once an individual is unable to control buying, he will frequently purchase unnecessary items or more and shop for longer periods than was intended. Thus compulsive buying behavior is positively associated with joy seeking tendencies. In line of previous research compulsive buyers feel guilty after purchasing items that they do not need, and often suffer negative emotional and economic consequences as a result of their purchasing behavior. Predisposition factors like tendency to spend, compulsive drive to spend, feeling about shopping and spending, dysfunctional spending are particularly common in compulsive buyers. Post purchase guilt is also common.

## **Implications and Direction for Future Research**

To determine the prevalence and risk factors for compulsive buying disorder further effort is desired. As compulsive buying has gained increasing attention from marketers and researchers all over the world, efforts have been made to identify the underlying determinants of the behavior from diverse perspectives. However, no research has been made to examine whether gender variables affect compulsive buying behavior of youth in Pakistan. This study has significance in terms of being the first one to explore the relationship between demographic variable (age) and compulsive buying offering new perspective on this extreme buying behavior. The findings of this study provide a few implications for researchers and government policy makers. The choice is clear for policy makers and researchers. For young consumer, parental and social guidance is necessary. The following are some suggestions for future studies. As the scope of this study was limited to respondents in the metropolitan area, future research conducted with more representative pools reflecting broader demographical characteristics would add additional credibility to the findings. In addition, one might like to isolate a demographic group, such as different age groups of men and women, and compare them to a mainstream population. It was beyond the scope of this study. It would be interesting to expand this study cross culturally and compare cultures with different degrees of economic development. Studies using clinically valid interviews are needed to evaluate these results. Intensive studies of individuals with compulsive buying disorder using standardized and reliable instruments can help establish its complications. Greater knowledge of compulsive buying will help clinicians to develop more specific and effective therapies. The emotional and functional toll of compulsive buying and the frequency of disorders suggest that studies of treatments and social interventions are warranted.

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